Title: A study of Team Coaching within a multidisciplinary team in an adult mental health setting

Introduction & Rationale

There is now a legal and professional requirement for multidisciplinary team working in the adult mental health services (Mental Health Commission, 2006, Mental Health Commission (MHC) Reports, 2016, 2017, 2018). It is argued that Multidisciplinary teams work collaboratively together to provide evidence-based care to service users (MHC, 2016, 2017, 2018). However, the effectiveness of multidisciplinary teamworking has been identified as a significant problem in numerous MHC reports over the years (MHC, 2016, 2017, 2018). It is argued that MDT's work together and share a common philosophy to meet the needs of individuals under their care (Orovwuje, 2008). However, team integration is difficult to achieve among members of varying disciplines, because members have different perspectives and experiences, which can both enhance and impede team functioning ((Roberge and van Dick, 2010). One such approach in addressing these difficulties is the use of team coaching which is supported by the HSE (2015). Currently there is little empirical research evidence to support the efficacy of a team coaching approach and the distinction between team coaching, team training, team facilitation and team building interventions remains unclear (Jones, Napiersky and Lyubovnikova, 2019). However, there are many recommendations as to how coaches should approach team coaching and several models to follow when involved in this process (Hackman & Wageman, 2005; Clutterbuck, 2007; Brown & Grant, 2010; Hawkins, 2011; Thornton, 2016) Better understanding of multidisciplinary teams and specifically team coaching may provide the missing link in MDT team effectiveness (Shuffler et al., 2018).

The doctorate forms a discrete part of a broader team coaching research project. Although two researchers will be engaged in research, two distinct projects will be undertaken and the academic outcome of the project will be two distinct DBAs. Both my team coach and I will use the same multidisciplinary team for our fieldwork. Working as a pair in a project of this type will add another voice and new set of eyes. (Britton, 2013). Co-facilitation will allow one team coach to facilitate while the other coach observes. The second coach can help gauge participants reactions, both verbal and non-verbal and their overall involvement in the team coaching process.

Aims

The aim of the study is to investigate the contribution of team coaching to multidisciplinary team working in a mental health care setting. This aim will be achieved through an action research approach.

Primary Objective
The primary objective of this research is to explore the relationship between team coaching processes/interventions and team effectiveness.

**Secondary Objective(s)**

1. Conduct action research team coaching interventions with multi-disciplinary teams to explain participant’s significant moments of change

2. Critically explore the key transformations and impacts of team coaching interventions on team members.

3. Critically reflect on my experience as a team coach and identify the key personal challenges that could inform my practice and that of other practitioners

**Methodology**

This research will adopt an Action Research (AR) approach. AR brings together action and reflection and in doing so contributes to creating new knowledge (Coghlan & Brannick 2014) which is in line with the principles of coaching as a learning process, (Cook, 2016). What was it about AR that will enable me to investigate into my area of concern, which is why MDT teams don’t work as effective as they should and enable me to improve my professional coaching practice? I also wanted to develop my own learning and AR is co-created which provides multiple perspectives and values each person’s experience as unique. I was resolute that I wanted to research “with” rather than “on” other participants from the beginning. Hence, I have chosen to be an insider coach researcher. My aim is to empower the MDT to focus on change to develop knowledge practically within the research process and all participants including myself can learn from this process (Reason & Bradbury 2011). I believe learning should be reciprocal where the researcher works collaboratively with participants to develop solutions together and not on their behalf (Schuiling & Kiewiet 2016). At the core of AR is a change of practice which corresponds so closely to why I wanted to research this area. I wanted to improve my practice and make a contribution to how teams work together for the benefit of the service user. (Reason & Bradbury 20011, McNiff & Whitehead 2009). In conducting team coaching under the framework of action research, the researcher is creating a collective space for reflection to generate knowledge and dialogue and remain open to an evolving reality. (Reason, 2003; Reason & Bradbury, 2008, Clutterbuck, 2010). Reflective practice has a key role to play in helping team’s foster change, which can trigger transformation leadership (Clutterbuck, 2016). AR provides a framework for doing this. Researchers can begin to see themselves as reflective practitioners who dare to venture into the “swampy lowlands” of practice (Schon, 2003). The structures and processes of an action research enquiry and of team coaching development are in mutual support (King, 2015). Much as with action research, rather than ‘doing research’ and applying the findings to coaching practice, action research can be a coaching practice in its own right (King, 2015). However, there are some disadvantages to being an ‘insider’ coach researcher and too close to the data (Coghlan, 2004). I need to be mindful of my own beliefs and prejudices about multidisciplinary teams and organisational culture (Coghlan & Brannick 2014).
Description of Method/ Protocol

The principal design feature of the study is action research. Data will be collected through participation in team coaching sessions focused on specific challenges faced by the team. All Team Coaching Sessions will reflect the Action Research Cycles (Coghlan, & Brannick, 2014) over a period of approximately six months. Monthly debriefing and recontracting is built into the research design and participants experiences. In this action research study multiple forms of data will be collected throughout the six months team coaching interventions as follows:

(1) Participants will be asked to complete an online Pre and Post Team Diagnostic Survey (TDS) – to describe their current features of work practices. This is a well-established and validated tool (Hackman & Wageman, 2005).

(2) Team coaching semi-structured interviews with individual team member. These will be audio recorded and transcribed (subject to consent)

(3) Use of flip chart material and other data generated during team coaching sessions.

(4) Reflective diaries to be maintained by both team coaches ((Engin, 2011)

(5) Post 6 months coaching sessions- semi structured interviews with individual participants to review the process. These will be audio recorded and transcribed (subject to consent).

Findings will be analysed using thematic analysis following the schema outlined in Braun and Clarke (2005) and (Nowell et al., 2017). As part of the collaborative principle of Action Research, initial data from the pre-coaching semi-structured interviews such as the 1:1 interviews and coaching outcome themes will be shared with the team to allow them to also apply a thematic approach to their sense making. NVivo12 software may feature in data management and analysis processes.

Questions, reflections and thoughts for Doctorate workshop.

1) The complexities of taking on both the role of researcher and the role of coach simultaneously and researching my own organisation (although not directly) (subjectivity threats).
2) Managing volume of collected data
3) Using participants as co-researchers?
4) The use of research diaries as a data collection method (structured or unstructured?)
5) How to prepare for action research and helping to anticipate and prepare for any ethical challenges that may affect the research process as it unfolds.
6) Situating myself as an insider action researcher without feeling I am performing.